



Division of Agriculture Activities

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AK Division of Agriculture Website:
<http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag>

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Online Directory

<http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/Marketing/NewFoodFarmProductDirectory.xls>

*Is your farm in the newest directory?
Check online and find out!*

Click on links below to see details:

Mat-Su Borough Agricultural Land Sales:

<http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/MSBAqLand.pdf>

ARLF Land Asset Management Staff

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Note from the Director

It is hard to believe that another year has gone and it is already 2009.

Looking over the past year it is important to note some major milestones that Alaska Agriculture has encountered. First, and foremost in the media was the closing of Matanuska Maid in December of 2007. This iconic infrastructure, with its red and white label, was known statewide and had begun as the Matanuska Valley Farmer's Cooperative Association in 1936. It had continued to play a crucial role in the tumultuous dairy industry for 72 years. Matanuska Creamery opened their doors in the spring of 2008 and we again have two in-state creameries (Matanuska Creamery and Northern Lights Dairy) providing quality product to the citizens of Alaska.

A major hog operation has begun in the Delta region. I had the privilege of touring the facility this past fall and saw a barn full of young gilts adjusting to their brand new surroundings. Rumor has it, that many litters have since joined the group and Alaska will have the opportunity to enjoy some Alaska grown pork this upcoming season.

Alaskan's have shown increased interest in "buying locally" and "knowing their grower". We now have 25 Farmer's Markets statewide. These markets provide an excellent opportunity for the niche farmers, both small and large, to sell their product directly to the consumer. Visit our website for more information on times and locations.

The Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund (ARLF) celebrated 55 years of operation in August 2008. This program continues to promote industry growth and stability by providing financing for agricultural enterprises not normally available from traditional lenders.

I was able to attend a portion of the Peony conference this past week. We have the unique opportunity to grow these beautiful flowers to fill a market void. These flowers are in demand world wide and I expect to see Alaska Peonies as a new export product from Alaska.

I will be attending the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture in Washington, DC. This conference is held February 5-8 and local as well as national agriculture issues are discussed. I have scheduled a meeting with Cindy Smith, who is the Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Administrator, to discuss export issues in Alaska.

Thank you for your commitment to the Alaska Agriculture Industry!

Franci

ARLF Land & Asset Manager

Hello again from the Asset Management corner of the Division of Agriculture. As promised in the last Division of Agriculture Newsletter, I am providing an update of the ongoing sale process of the ARLF disposal of the former Feed Mill property in Palmer. The property is located in downtown Palmer and underwent an extensive cleanup prior to being offered.



Historical items found on the property were moved to a secure location to be made available for future display. The original offering did not elicit any responsive bids and a pre-approved over-the-counter offering is currently in process. The amount necessary to purchase the property is 1.318 million dollars. Interest in the property has been moderate. The Division plans to provide the Board of Agriculture & Conservation with some options at their next meeting to help stimulate interest in this property and facilitate a successful sale.

Since the last edition, I had the opportunity to visit Delta Meat & Sausage, a privately owned slaughter/processing/retail facility located Southeast of Delta Junction on the Alaska Highway. I met Cathie McCollum and Jeannie Pinkelman (Cathie's daughter) who run the operation. Jeannie provided me an unscheduled full tour of the facility. It was very informative. I was impressed with the efficiencies evidenced by the right-sized operations. The ratio in facility size to the amount of animals slaughtered/processed was significant. Their facility and operation are a good example that agriculture can be and is successful in Alaska. I tried some of their product and was thoroughly satisfied with the quality. You can visit their website at <http://www.deltameat.com>.

I also had the opportunity to visit a developing hog operation in the Eielson Agricultural Project area southeast of Fairbanks. I received a call from Todd Elsberry while I was in Fairbanks. He indicated several significant changes had occurred and he invited me to tour his operation during my visit. Charlie Knight of the Northern Office, Division of Ag accompanied me to see the changes in the operation and facility. The new facility is about 9000 sq. ft and is quite impressive. I witnessed over one hundred sows/gilts, several various boar types and many new births; as well as some feeder pigs being fattened up. The facility design was one that diminished manual manure handling by maintaining the pens above the manure storage pit allowing storage of +/- 270 days based on swine numbers. It also helped to ensure a clean environment for the swine. Todd's children (Ashley & Austin) provided us the tour and were well versed in the operational requirements and quite knowledgeable in the proper care of the animals. Targeted markets for roasters and fat hog sales are expected to begin surfacing in June. They anticipate producing between 1,600-1,800 head in their first year of operation requiring about 600 ton of barley (200 of which they'll produce).

That's all for now.....next issue will highlight the Alaska Farmers Coop Feed Store in Delta.

RAY NIX

Land Sales & Grazing Lease Staff

http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_sales.htm

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Land Sales and Grazing Leases

The Division of Agriculture has received approval to proceed with a sale of up to 7 agricultural parcels totaling ~1483 acres of agriculture land in the Interior. The parcels range in size from 140 to 560 acres. These parcels will be combined with a 40-acre parcel that was previously approved for sale and offered at an outcry auction. It will be Auction # 457 and is planned for the summer of 2009.

Now that the parcels have been approved by DNR for sale, the Northern Region will design and write the auction brochure which will contain all the essential information about the parcels and how to participate in the sale. Once the brochure is complete it will be available to the public for at least 30 days before the auction.

DNR has a website that provides information about upcoming state land sales (<http://www.dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/landsale/>). This site will allow anyone to subscribe to receive an email notification when brochures are available.

The Division is also currently adjudicating several parcels nominated for sale in the Northern Region. These are parcels that have been sold as agricultural land but have been returned to the state for different reasons. These types of parcels are often nominated by local farmers who would like to purchase the parcel if the Division would offer it for sale. Farmers, or anyone, can nominate any state land for sale by filling out a simple form identifying the parcel and submit it to a DNR office. The Division of Agriculture will adjudicate the nominations if the land is classified or to be used for agricultural purposes. Nominations for non-agricultural land are adjudicated by the Division of Mining, Land and Water.

The Division of Agriculture is evaluating the suitability of the nominated parcels for use as agricultural land. If a decision is made to offer the parcels for sale, they will be added to an upcoming sale.

The Division is also working to develop larger agriculture projects in the future. The Nenana-Totchaket project, west of Nenana, is a 125,000 acre block of agriculture land that we are looking at. Kobe North is another project we are currently working on. This project is a 4000-acre project south of Anderson, west of the Coghill Bridge on the Parks Highway. These projects will take lots of time to develop because of the lead time needed for evaluating, designing, survey, and appraisals. We will post updates in this newsletter as we move along.

Please feel free to contact Erik or Dan with any agriculture land questions you may have.

Inspection Section

Size Matters

There are size requirements for the diameter and length of carrots that are marked either US No 1 or US No 2.

1. The US No 1 grade requires the diameter of *each carrot* to be not less than $\frac{3}{4}$ inch or more than 1-1/2 inches and length not less than 5 inches.
2. The US No 2 grade requires the diameter of *each carrot* to be not less than 1 inch or more than 3 inches and length not less than 3 inches.

How many carrots have to meet the size requirements and still be within grade?

- The tolerance of carrots larger than the specified diameter is 5 percent.
- The tolerance of carrots smaller than the specified diameter is 10 percent.*
- The tolerance for carrots shorter than the specified minimum length is 10 percent.*

***Combination cannot be over 10 percent**

***See Diagram Below**

Inspection Staff

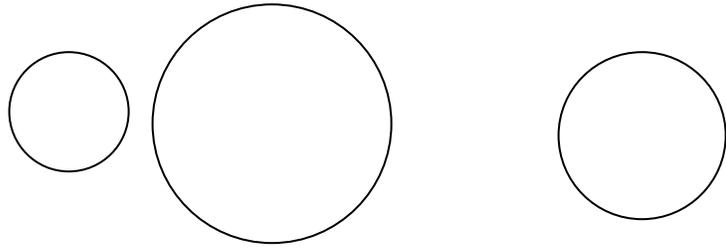
http://dnr.alaska.gov/aq/aq_is.htm

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**US No 1 Minimum and Maximum*
Diameters**

**US No 2 Minimum* Diameters
(Maximum not shown)**

3in

5in

US No 1 and No 2 Minimum Length*

***The diagrams above may be used as a guide but may not be
USDA accurate.**

*The source of this information has been provided by the USDA "Topped
Carrots" Market Inspection Instructions for a complete version of the
USDA "Topped Carrots" Standard,*

[http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC505025
&](http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC505025&)

Marketing & Inspection Section

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Peonies – A Future in Alaska



**ALASKA
PEONY
GROWERS
ASSOCIATION**

Have you heard about the "peony project" being conducted by the Division of Agriculture? Maybe you've seen some of the newspaper articles, online blogs or other coverage about peonies in Alaska. If not, here's an overview.

In 2007 the Division of Agriculture was awarded a USDA Federal State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP) grant to research the viability of a peony industry in Alaska. This was spurred by the horticultural research being conducted by Dr. Pat Holloway at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, Georgeson Botanical Gardens.

Have you heard about the new publication "Alaska Farm & Ranch News?" The first publication recently came out. You can subscribe by emailing: editor@alaskafarmandranchnews.com

The subscription is \$18/year.

You can also go online to:

<http://news.mywebpal.com/index.cfm?pnpid=1061>

To view other Farm and Ranch News. However, many of the articles from the print version will not be available online.

The Division of Agriculture's project began in February of 2008 with a two-day meeting following the Greenhouse & Nursery Conference in Fairbanks. Fifty-six people attended and the Alaska Peony Growers Association (APGA) was unofficially launched.

To date the group has held two more meetings, created an informational brochure, developed the APGA logo (above), launched the APGA website www.alaskapeonies.org, and moved towards a formal organization with non-profit status.

If you are interested in more information about this project, please contact Amy. You can also email: info@alaskapeonies.org.

Other News:

National Speaker Highlight of Statewide SARE Conference

The Fifth Annual Sustainable Agriculture Conference and Organic Growers School is scheduled for March 17-18, 2009, at the Fairbanks Princess Riverside Lodge in Fairbanks, Alaska. Presented by the UAF Cooperative Extension Service, the highlight of this year's conference will be national guest speaker George DeVault, newly appointed president and executive director of the Seed Savers Exchange in Decorah, Iowa.

The Seed Savers Exchange is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of heirloom varieties of vegetables, fruits, flowers and herbs, and agricultural biodiversity in general. DeVault's position represents the pinnacle of a career that has included farming, mentoring farmers and writing about farming. He is also a volunteer fire chief, W.K. Kellogg Foundation Food and Society policy fellow and soon-to-be grandfather.

Since 1984, George and his wife Melanie have owned and operated a diversified organic farm growing vegetables, blueberries, flowers and livestock in Emmaus, Pa. At its peak, their farm provided food to 100 families through its Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) service. In 2004, the Lehigh County, Pa., Conservation District honored the DeVaults as Conservation Farmers of the Year.

In addition to his farming career, DeVault has been active in his community by serving as a board member of the Lehigh County Agricultural Land Preservation Board, the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture, and the North American Farmers Direct Marketing Association. He is past president of the Emmaus Farmer's Market, Inc., and has served as a volunteer firefighter since 1982, now serving as fire chief of his township fire station.

Some of DeVault's numerous journalistic achievements include almost 25 years as a farm magazine and book editor and publisher at Rodale, Inc., 10 years heading *The New Farm* magazine, and in 1990 he became the United States editor of *Novii Fermer* ("New Farmer" in Russian). He has written for publications such as *Successful Farming*, *Farm Journal*, *Top Producer*, *Mother Earth News*, *Organic Gardening*, *GRIT* and *Growing For Market*. He has also edited and/or published many gardening and farming books including *How to Make \$100,000 Farming 25 Acres*, *Backyard Market Gardening*, *Truckpatch* and *Return to Pleasant Valley*.

At the Sustainable Agriculture Conference and Organic Growers School, DeVault will speak on season extension, mainly through the use of high tunnels, floating row covers and crop rotation. He will also address the importance of saving seeds and how to go about it. The DeVaults have built three high tunnels, one hoop house and a heated seed-starting house on their farm in Pennsylvania. They have a lot of photos of those structures under construction as well as of crops at different times of the year. Other photos feature growers like Eliot Coleman building and using their various greenhouses.

In addition to the keynote national speaker, the SARE conference will feature presenters from around Alaska sharing information on topics such

as University of Alaska research on fruit and berry production and fish waste composting; farm soil fertility; weed suppression; year-round CSA's in Alaska; egg and poultry production for local market; and two panel discussions on composting and value-added agricultural products.

Don't miss the special pre-conference activities taking place March 16! Participants will tour Chena Hot Springs Resort to see their many geothermal energy projects and year-round greenhouses, followed by a grant-writing workshop and tour of the UAF Cold Climate Housing and Research Center.

All interested individuals are encouraged to attend this exciting and informative conference. For more information, contact Michele Hebert at ffmah@uaf.edu or 474-2423. To register, contact Ronda Halvarson at fnrlb@uaf.edu or 474-2450.

Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey (CAPS)

Described in last month's newsletter, the Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey, or CAPS, is coordinated through the Northern Region Office by the State Survey Coordinator (SSC), Charlie Knight. The purpose of the surveys is to protect our nation's resources and to facilitate international trade. But what does CAPS do in Alaska, how is it done, and who does it?

CAPS surveys are conducted in accordance with USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Plant Protection and Quarantine (APHIS-PPQ) national guidelines and protocols. Some of the surveys are conducted nationally and are generally in response to a specific pest infestation, while other surveys are more specific to meet the needs or interests of the state. CAPS pest detection surveys involve either trapping for insects or conducting visual searches for pests at particular locations. Insect traps are baited with pheromones engineered to attract a particular pest. Traps are checked at certain time intervals during the survey. If a pest is detected, further lab analysis, confirmation, and response is provided by USDA-APHIS-PPQ.

It is the responsibility of the SSC to coordinate surveys throughout the state. This can be logistically difficult considering the size of Alaska: approximately 365 million acres with over 44,000 miles of coastline. The Division of Agriculture, therefore, coordinates with other cooperators located throughout the state. Locations that represent a high risk of exotic pest introduction are surveyed. See the map and description at left for more details. Cooperative Extension Service Integrated Pest Management Technicians do a large portion of the pest surveying in Alaska. Many of the surveys would not be successful without their assistance. The U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Agricultural Research Service, National Park Service, and State Division of Forestry also participate in surveys on a volunteer basis. Many of the locations in southeast Alaska could not feasibly be surveyed without their cooperation.

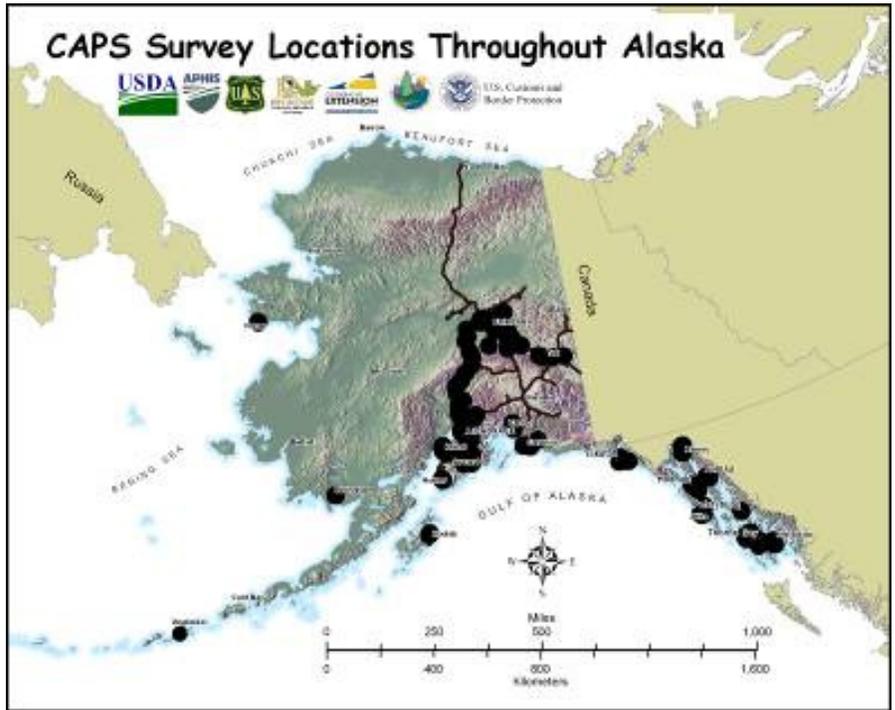
To recap, interagency cooperation is a very important component of detecting pests early, before they become a problem, and is essential to the effectiveness of CAPS. But this is only one component of the CAPS program. Public education, participation, and communication are extremely important. The public, as well as other agencies are essential in detecting exotic pests before they become established in Alaska.

Visit the National Pest Information System (NAPIS) Pest Tracker website at <http://pest.ceris.purdue.edu/index.php> for more information about CAPS targeted pests and pest distribution maps in the US.

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The black dots on this map (enlarged for scale), represent survey locations throughout Alaska. Multiple Agencies cooperate with the CAPS Program in order to survey such a large area as Alaska. Survey locations target potential exotic pest pathways such as the road system, international airports, and marine port communities. Many ports in Alaska receive vessel traffic originating from foreign or other domestic ports where pests exotic to Alaska either naturally occur or have been detected. Vehicle traffic into the state from the lower 48 also presents a potential pathway for exotic pest introduction.

Plant Material Center

http://dnr.alaska.gov/aq/aq_pmc.htm

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Plant Material Center - PMC

Winter at the PMC means plants are covered with snow, waiting for spring. Plans for spring begin way back in the previous fall. An Ethno botany Garden (traditional use of plants) has been designed and constructed at the PMC. This Garden will be a destination place for schools, landscape architects, gardeners, Alaska Native Peoples, etc. to come to learn about traditional native plant usage, how to plant native plants, and which plants might be good for their own programs.

Construction on the garden ended before the ground froze solid. Planning for which plants are needed for each ecological and cultural area meant searching through many accessions of seed that were gathered throughout the years. Then these seeds were subjected to a Tetrazolium test to find out if they were viable. Those that showed possibilities were researched to figure out how and when they should be planted. About 45 different species were selected for fall planting in flats and pots. They were then put outside in the lathe house. For best germination, it showed that these seeds needed the cold, freezing, thawing, snow, etc. that goes on during our winters here in Alaska.

So, instead of just our field plants being covered with snow, there are many baby seeds covered with snow – just waiting for spring warm temperatures to germinate. Let's hope that we will have hundreds of baby plants that need homes in our garden! *Peggy Hunt*

